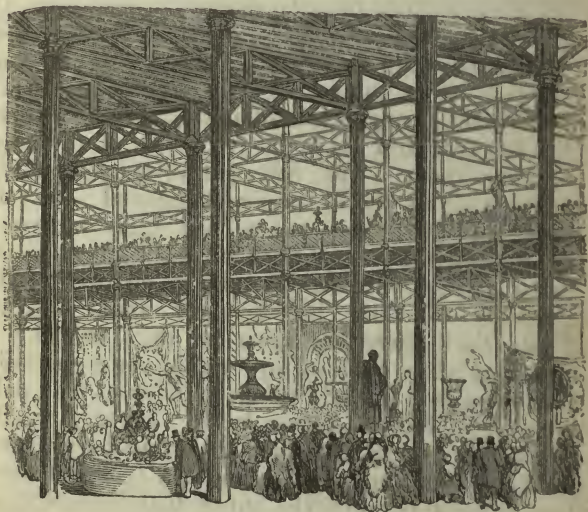




A WALK THROUGH THE CRYSTAL PALACE.



ON the 20th of June, 1814, had a stranger been passing through Hyde Park, he would have found assembled within it a vast multitude of eager spectators. The occasion which drew them together was a remarkable one. They crowded to gaze on the allied sovereigns of Europe, who were then on a visit to the English metropolis. These illustrious guests met for mutual congratulation at an eventful period in the world's history. Napoleon Bonaparte had retired to Elba, and a war of almost unparalleled

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY, INSTITUTED 1799 ;
56, PATERNOSTER ROW, AND 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.

severity had apparently been brought to a close. Associated as their presence was with the prospect of peace and national repose, shouts of joyful acclamation greeted the monarchs as they passed along.

Nearly forty years have elapsed since that time. Of the royal personages who took part in the scene to which reference has been made, none now survive. Of the multitude too, who shouted in their train, the greater part have, doubtless, long since had their voices hushed in the silence of death. In the same park, however, another mighty gathering is again witnessed. Long as the interval is which separates the two occasions, there is yet a link of connexion between them. The first gathering denoted the opening of an era of peace: the second marks the mode in which that peace has been improved. An invitation has gone forth to the nations of the earth, calling on them to unite in exhibiting the products of their industry and skill. Within Hyde Park, there has risen for their reception a structure whose form is, through the engraver's skill, familiar as a household thing to millions, not only in our own, but in distant lands. Light, airy, and graceful, it has sprung from the ground with more than magical celerity, and, amidst a crowd of wonders, is itself perhaps the thing that is most wonderful.

The Crystal Palace to which we have thus alluded will doubtless be visited by millions of spectators, each of whom will regard the structure and its objects in different lights. The statesman will view it in its political aspects, the philosopher in its moral or scientific bearing, the merchant will trace its relations to commerce, while the idler and the man of pleasure will see in it little more than the means of gratifying an unreflecting curiosity. We invite our readers to join with us in walking through the building and viewing the novel scene in some of its plain and obviously religious bearings.

If the exterior of the Crystal Palace awakens admiration, still more are the objects within it calculated to do so. It is filled with the manifold productions of manifold minds. From the raw material, up to the costliest combinations of it which wealth or genius can effect, specimens are here. Articles "for necessity and convenience, for comfort and luxury, for ornament and display—things carved and moulded, vast and minute, bold and elegant, simple and elaborate—groups, heaps, masses of all manner of cunning work." The multiplicity of objects bewilders the eye. Wonder reaches a point beyond which it cannot pass. Never perhaps was such a proof presented of the triumph of mind over matter. Man, in this hall of nations, is seen as a prince subjugating each province of material nature beneath his sway.

Many will stop short here. But are man's skill, man's genius, man's power, to be the sole objects of our praise? This were, with the heathen of old, to worship the hammer, the axe, and the saw, and to forget Him who bestowed the ability to wield them. Let us rise from the creature to the Creator. In each form of beauty let us see fresh traces of that wonder-working hand which gives man the mind to invent, the finger to frame, and the material to mould. In every art that promotes social comfort, let us recognise a new motive for loving Him, whose bounty sent them all.

Previous expositions of industry on the continent have generally been confined to the display of the productions of a single country: in the building before us, however, are ranged those of the world at large. As we wander from compartment to compartment of this great hive of industry, some specimen of the genius of almost every civilized nation invites our attention. Britain has its steam-engine, and countless specimens of native skill; France unfolds its silks, and spreads its tapestries; Belgium has its iron wares; Italy sends its sculptures, and

Bavaria its bronzes. Austria surprises us with elegant designs in the household arts; the Zollverein follows with its rising train of manufactures; Holland, Spain, and Portugal have each some ingenious novelty; America sends her homely but useful products; while India, Turkey, and China are rich in oriental luxuries.

How clearly may we trace in such a varied spectacle the proofs that God intended originally the families of man to dwell in harmony and love. Each country is here seen to depend on some other, in a greater or a less degree, for productions that minister to its comfort and enjoyment. As in the natural so in the social body, no part can say to another, "I have no need of you." Why then, let us ask, have nations been so slow to learn this lesson? What has rendered "universal brotherhood" all but an empty name? To what shall we attribute the jarring discord, which has hitherto kept those at variance whom God made of one blood, and gifted with the same intellectual powers? Sin, we reply, is the cause. In departing from the love of the Creator, man has become the slave of selfish affections. Let this element so destructive of happiness be removed; then, and not till then, will the true reign of fraternity commence.

While admiring the productions of other countries, there is, however, much in the spectacle before us to awaken admiration and gratitude at the distinguished position which England maintains in this exhibition. Her vast railway system is appropriately represented here by the massive locomotive. The gigantic hydraulic press recalls her engineering victories at the Britannia Bridge. The electric telegraph marks her progress in scientific discovery. Machinery in varied forms shows that she still holds the foremost rank in mechanical invention. The cotton fabrics of Manchester, and the hardwares of Birmingham, remind us of her manufacturing greatness. Gigantic

masses of coal attest her mineral wealth. Agricultural products show the richness of her soil. Models of ships, docks and harbours illustrate the extent of her maritime and colonial resources, while delicate works of art prove that amidst the useful, her sons have not forgot the beautiful.

If a foreigner were to call on us to point out the object in all this varied collection which has most effectually contributed to our national greatness, we would point out to him, not our steam-engines, not our manufactures, not our ships; but pausing before one of the least pretending portions of the building, we would take from amidst a number of copies of the word of God, in different languages, a version of the English Bible. "Here," we would say, "has been one of the main elements of our greatness." While England was a Roman Catholic country, and this volume was a sealed book, she remained an inferior political power. When the seal was taken off from it, however, the mental faculties of England's children were unchained; invention and enterprise commenced their glorious career. May this book be ever dear to us and our children. When its truths are bedimmed by Romish error, the sun of our country's greatness will have begun to set.

The concourse of men from every nation which this Exhibition will draw together, is not one of its least marvellous features. Such great gatherings have in former times taken place, but their objects were of a far less elevated character. The families of man in the ancient world assembled on the plains of Shinar, but it was to erect a monument of vain glorious folly. The Olympic Games brought together the nations of Greece, but it was to contend for a fading prize. In more recent times, the great army of Napoleon, which perished in the snows of Russia, had representatives from almost every state in Europe; but martial conflict was the ignoble purpose which bound them together. For the first time in the history of the world, the representatives of

nations meet for an object purely pacific. Their rivalry is bloodless. Their triumphs cause no tears to flow. The weapons of industry alone meet in harmless conflict.

A gathering of so singular a character has naturally given rise to varied speculations as to its results. Some men of warm fancy seem to see in it the type of a golden age, and anticipate that from this period the notes of harmony and goodwill will resound among the children of men; that war shall be banished, and universal peace commence her blessed reign. The student of the word of God, however, will look at matters with a more sober eye. Gratefully as he will hail this meeting and endeavour to improve it as a means of promoting feelings of goodwill among nations, he will desire to see some better foundation for peace than it presents. In the diffusion of the gospel—in the check which it imposes on the sinful passions of mankind—he will look for the true source of this blessing. Without this agency, all peace, he knows, must be precarious and uncertain.

Leaving however these questions, let us gaze upon the countless throng that wanders through this treasure-house of art and skill. There is something solemn in this spectacle of assembled multitudes; and as the eye glances over the sea of life rolling before it, the words of an eloquent writer of our day find an appropriate illustration:—"There are scenes in nature that fill the soul with solemnity and awe. The majesty of the ocean—the sublimity of the midnight sky studded with its countless stars—the everlasting mountains hiding their crests amidst the clouds of heaven—these overpower the mind with a sense of grandeur: but this scene is grander than all of them. For I gaze on a mighty mass of immortality, a multitudinous gathering of mortal immortals, finite infinities. There is not an individual before me but enshrines a soul, weighed against which all 'the dread magnificence of unintelligent creation' is poor. When every star shall have been

swept from the firmament—when the sun shall have set to rise no more—when the elements of the visible creation shall have melted with fervent heat, then each soul now thrilling with attention will be existing in full consciousness and imperishable being in depth of torment or in height of bliss.”

Towards the middle of the last century an empress of Russia constructed a crystal palace, employing however as its material, not sheets of glass, but blocks of ice cut from the bosom of the Neva. Brilliantly for a while sparkled the glittering toy, and then melted away. Our Crystal Palace, too, must also one day disappear and be numbered among the things that were. Each beautiful work of art which it contains will in due time perish; but the immortal beings who have congregated to behold its treasures shall know no end of their existence. All, too, who have crowded the avenues of this congress of nations—the monarch, the noble, the man of science, the merchant, the giddy trifler, the gazing rustic, all, all shall meet again. The appointed hour is on the wing, (oh that the thought might awaken to reflection the children of folly!) when the Son of man shall gather before him all nations; when the great white throne shall be erected; when the dead, small and great, shall stand before God; when the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.

This shall be the final gathering of nations. In that vast assemblage you, reader, shall be present. You shall stand before the Judge; from his lips you shall hear the sentence that bids you enter into everlasting joy, or depart into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Now then, while it is time, be entreated, if you have not already done so, to prepare for this solemn assemblage. Let no dreams of false security lull you to indifference. “If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” In vain, however,

will you seek to stand before the Judge in your own righteousness. The law of God demands a perfect obedience; it takes cognizance of the heart as well as of the outward life, and pronounces on a single violation the awful penalty, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." How welcome then should be the gospel sound. "Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus," Rom. iii. 21—26.

Flee then, dear reader, while it is yet time, in faith to the Saviour. You will find him full of compassion. Cast yourself in deep self-abhorrence at his feet, as a lost and guilty sinner. Ask him for the Holy Spirit. In his strength repent of sin and take up Christ's light and easy yoke. Justified by his grace, regenerated by his Spirit, you will then view without alarm the advent of the great and final gathering of the nations before the Son of man.